## WHAT IS CLAIMED IS:

- 1 1. A method of operating a communications network
- 2 including a firewall comprising the steps of:
- 3 monitoring delays associated with the closing of ports
- 4 corresponding to communications sessions following the
- 5 termination of said communications sessions as indicated by
- 6 session control signals; and
- 7 generating an alert signal when a monitored closing
- 8 delay exceeds a preselected threshold.
- 1 2. The method according to claim 1, further comprising
- 2 the steps of:
- 3 communicating said alert signal to a security
- 4 management system; and
- operating said security management system to initiate
- 6 at least one security operation in response to said alert
- 7 signal.
- 1 3. The method of claim 2, wherein said step of initiating
- 2 at least one security operation includes:
- adjusting network routing to reduce the load on the
- 4 firewall system which triggered said alarm signal.
- 1 4. The method of claim 2, wherein said step of initiating
- 2 at least one security operation includes:
- 3 controlling the firewall at which said closing delay
- 4 exceeding said threshold was detected to drop traffic until
- 5 the detected closing delays at said firewall no longer
- 6 exceed said threshold.
- 1 5. The method of claim 2, wherein said step of initiating

- 2 at least one security operation includes:
- 3 notifying a system administrator of said alarm
- 4 condition.
- 1 6. The method of claim 2, wherein monitoring delays
- 2 associated with the closing of ports corresponding to
- 3 communications sessions includes:
- 4 transmitting test signals through a port corresponding
- 5 to an established communications session;
- 6 monitoring to detect said test signals which pass
- 7 through said port;
- 8 transmitting a signal to terminate said established
- 9 communications session; and
- determining the time between transmitting said signal
- 11 to terminate said established communications session and
- 12 when the monitored test signals can no longer be detected
- 13 passing through said port.
  - 1 7. The method of claim 6, wherein said test signals are
  - 2 IP packets and where said signal to terminate said
  - 3 established communications session is one of a SIP and an
  - 4 H.323 compliant signals.
  - 1 8. The method of claim 7, further comprising:
  - 2 monitoring delays associated with the opening of ports
  - 3 corresponding to communications sessions following the
  - 4 transmission of session initiation signals used to
  - 5 establish said communications session; and
  - 6 generating an opening delay alert signal when a
  - 7 monitored opening delay exceeds a preselected opening delay
  - 8 threshold.

- 1 9. A method of operating a communications network
- 2 including a firewall comprising the steps of:
- 3 monitoring delays associated with the opening of ports
- 4 corresponding to communications sessions being initiated
- 5 through the use of session control signals; and
- 6 generating a alert signal when a monitored opening
- 7 delay exceeds a preselected threshold.
- 1 10. The method according to claim 9, further comprising
- 2 the steps of:
- 3 communicating said alert signal to a security
- 4 management system; and
- operating said security management system to initiate
- 6 at least one security operation in response to said alert
- 7 signal.
- 1 11. The method of claim 10, wherein said step of
- 2 initiating at least one security operation includes:
- adjusting network routing to reduce the load on the
- 4 firewall system which triggered said alarm signal.
- 1 12. The method of claim 10, wherein said step of
- 2 initiating at least one security operation includes:
- 3 controlling the firewall at which said opening delay
- 4 exceeding said threshold was detected to drop traffic until
- 5 the detected opening delays at said firewall no longer
- 6 exceed said threshold.
- 1 13. The method of claim 10, wherein said step of
- 2 initiating at least one security operation includes:
- 3 notifying a system administrator of said alarm
- 4 condition.

- 1 14. A communications system comprising;
- 2 a firewall system responsive to session signals to
- 3 open and close ports in response to the establishment and
- 4 termination of communications sessions, respectively;
- 5 means for monitoring said firewall to detect a port
- 6 closing delay following a signal to terminate a
- 7 communications session; and
- an alarm generation device for generating an alarm
- 9 when a port closing delay is determined to exceed a
- 10 preselected threshold.
  - 1 15. The communications system of claim 14, further
  - 2 comprising:
  - 3 a security management system for receiving alarms
  - 4 generated by said alarm generation device and for
  - 5 performing at least one security operation in response to
  - 6 said alert signal.
  - 1 16. The communications system of claim 15, wherein said at
  - 2 least one security operation is a routing change operation,
  - 3 said security management system including means for
  - 4 transmitting routing change information to at least one
  - 5 network router to redirect at least some communications
  - 6 traffic away from said firewall to thereby reduce the
  - 7 traffic load on said firewall.
  - 1 17. The communications system of claim 15, wherein said at
  - 2 least one security operation is a firewall control
  - 3 operation, said security management system including means
  - 4 for signaling said firewall to drop traffic to reduce the
  - 5 load on said firewall.

- 1 18. The communications system of claim 15, wherein said at
- 2 least one security operation includes notifying a system
- 3 administrator of said detected port closing delay exceeding
- 4 said preselected threshold, said security management system
- 5 including a graphical display for showing a graphical
- 6 representation of the detected port closing delay
- 7 information.
- 1 19. The communications system of claim 15, wherein said
- 2 means for monitoring said firewall to detect a port closing
- 3 delay following a signal to terminate a communications
- 4 session includes:
- a probe signal generator for generating test signals
- 6 directed at a port associated with the communications
- 7 session being terminated; and
- a signal analyzer for determining when said generated
- 9 test signals cease passing through said port associated
- 10 with the communication session following transmission of a
- 11 signal to terminate said communications session.
  - 1 20. The communications system of claim 19, wherein said
  - 2 probe signal generator includes means for generating
  - 3 session signals used to initiate and terminate
  - 4 communications sessions conducted through said firewall.
  - 1 21. The communications system of claim 20, wherein said
  - 2 session signals are one of SIP signals and H.323 signals.
  - 1 22. The communications system of claim 20, wherein at
  - 2 least some of said test signals are IP packets.
  - 1 23. The communications system of claim 15, wherein said

- 2 security management system includes:
- 3 means for receiving alarms from a plurality of
- 4 different alarm generation devices located at different
- 5 locations in said communications system; and
- 6 means for analyzing alarms received from different
- 7 alarm generation devices, over a period of time, to
- 8 identify the location of one or more traffic sources
- 9 causing alarms during said period of time.
- 1 24. The communications system of claim 15, wherein said
- 2 security management system includes:
- 3 means for receiving alarms from a plurality of
- 4 different alarm generation devices located at different
- 5 locations in said communications system; and
- 6 means for analyzing alarms received from different
- 7 alarm generation devices, over a period of time, to predict
- 8 the occurrence of future security alarms.
- 1 25. A communications system comprising;
- 2 a firewall system responsive to session signals to
- 3 open and close ports in response to the establishment and
- 4 termination of communications sessions, respectively;
- 5 means for monitoring said firewall to detect a port
- 6 opening delay following a signal to establish a
- 7 communications session; and
- an alarm generation device for generating an alarm
- 9 when a port opening delay is determined to exceed a
- 10 preselected threshold.
- 1 26. The communications system of claim 14, further
- 2 comprising:
- 3 a security management system for receiving alarms

- 4 generated by said alarm generation device and for
  - 5 performing at least one security operation in response to
  - 6 said alert signal.